

VZCZCXRO5437  
OO RUEHCI  
DE RUEHKT #1577/01 2330820  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 210820Z AUG 07  
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6900  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 6032  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 6334  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1582  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 4358  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5625  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1820  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3753  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1818  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2905  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//JO2/J2/J3/J4/J45/J52// PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001577

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/20/2017

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: ARMY CHIEF ASKS FOR AMBASSADOR'S HELP TO  
PROTECT THE ARMY

REF: KATHMANDU 01314

Classified By: Ambassador Nancy Powell. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

#### Summary

1. (C) At an August 15 introductory courtesy call, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Rookmangud Katawal requested the Ambassador's assistance to protect the Nepalese Army from institutional alteration after the Constituent Assembly election. General Katawal listed the chief threats he perceives to the Army from a potential future civil government. He expressed the Army's commitment to supporting the election and civilian control of the military, while attaching caveats to both. He categorically ruled out any prospect of a military coup. End Summary.

#### Protecting the Army

2. (C) "Reintegration is disintegration," was how General Katawal expressed his chief concern. During the Ambassador's initial courtesy call on August 15, the COAS insisted that enlisting Maoists en masse in the immediate post-election environment would "destroy the security services." He expressed similar concerns regarding the potential for rapid down-sizing of the force. On both issues, General Katawal emphatically requested that the Ambassador intercede with Nepal civilian authorities--to include the Prime Minister--to prevent such potential policies from being pursued. General Katawal expressed his preferred policy that the Army be preserved from any institutional alteration for five years, and that Maoist combatants be returned to their home villages or be allowed to disperse to overseas employment. Citing civilian control of the military, General Katawal also argued that the Army could not be held responsible for past actions taken at the behest of legitimate state authority which might prove unpopular with future governments.

#### Supporting Elections and Conditions for Maoist Inclusion

13. (C) General Katawal repeatedly stated that the Constituent Assembly election had to be held, but he was less firm in expressing precisely when. Every expression of support for the election was paired with remarks noting prerequisites of establishing law and order, which Katawal assessed, had not been met. General Katawal stated that he supported Maoist political inclusion if they met four conditions: complete and public renunciation of violence; commitment to a democratic political system; commitment to a free market economy; and a commitment to "ballots, not bullets." He opined that these conditions, particularly the first, had not been met. The General stated that if "somehow, somehow," elections were not held as scheduled, the Army did have a plan for the subsequent period. He claimed he had told the Prime Minister about this plan, but not representatives of the political parties. Katawal also said that any election result would have to be acceptable to the "people," but did not explain how such acceptance, or its lack thereof, would be expressed.

#### Civilian Control of the Military

-----

14. (C) The COAS stated that the Army would obey the authority of any government which received the people's mandate, but would not tolerate an extremist or terrorist regime. General Katawal also claimed that the Army had never been a partisan participant in politics, and had no desire to risk damaging its reputation and international credibility, particularly that associated with its United Nations service.

#### No Coup

KATHMANDU 00001577 002 OF 002

-----

15. (C) In a one-on-one session, Katawal assured the Ambassador that the Nepalese Army had no plans for a coup. He said that the geo-political location of Nepal did not give him this "luxury." He talked briefly about the Pakistani and Bangladeshi Armies' involvements in their respective states, but said he had no intention of following in their footsteps.

When queried about U.S. policy towards the Maoists, the Ambassador assured the COAS that the Maoists were still on the terrorist list and that U.S. policy had not changed.

#### Comment

-----

16. (C) If the Constituent Assembly election happens, Katawal will not get his desired five-year grace period before the Nepalese Army is restructured. Being forced to downsize and integrate some Maoists--whom he still refers to as "extremists and terrorists"--may prove too much for the COAS.

The Army is also unlikely to get the amnesty it (and the Maoists) would prefer for gross human rights abuses committed during the insurgency. Under the circumstances, despite his caveats regarding support for the election and the civil authorities, post cannot be one hundred percent sure that Katawal has no intention of again bringing his soldiers out of their barracks. The COAS is aware that any overt interference by the Nepalese Army could threaten its institutional survival, but he also seems to believe that a new civilian government is also a threat to the Army in its current incarnation. If pressured to change too fast, too soon, he may act undemocratically.

POWELL